

National Board Report

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Service

In a previous issue of the *National Board Report*, I addressed one of the NBVME's values, namely transparency. This time, we will take a look at another one of them, service.

The NBVME and its office staff consider service to candidates and licensing boards to be one of the most important aspects of our work. We view candidates as our customers, since they pay a fee to take our examinations. We see licensing boards as our clients, because the NBVME exists primarily to provide examinations for use by veterinary medical licensing boards.

One way we emphasize service is to personalize the interaction between candidates and our office. When you call the NBVME office during normal office hours (generally 7am to 4:30pm, Central time), you will hear a real person on the telephone, and you will not have to deal with a voice messaging system. If you send us an e-mail message, you can expect a prompt and accurate response. The same goes with mail, and with questions posted on our discussion forums.

Another way to provide good service is to ensure that candidate materials are accurate and up to date. One of my pet peeves is a website that hasn't been updated in a long time, or that contains inaccurate information. Our website hosting system allows us to make changes to the site in minutes, so candidates and licensing boards can have confidence that the information on www.nbvme.org is as accurate and current as possible. Of course, nothing is perfect, but if errors or inconsistencies are brought to our attention, they can be corrected promptly.

The NBVME values its relationships with examination candidates, licensing boards, veterinary schools, and other constituents, and we work diligently to provide the level of service that our customers and clients expect and deserve.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD
Executive Director

Establishing a Passing Standard

Once an examination is developed, administered, and scored, what remains is to determine who passed and who failed. Licensing examinations like the NAVLE® commonly use a criterion-referenced, or content-based passing standard. Unlike a norm-referenced approach, where the passing point is determined based on the mean and standard deviation of a reference group of test takers, criterion-referenced scoring determines a passing standard based on the difficulty of individual test items. The standard is fixed and, theoretically, all candidates could pass or all candidates could fail.

The NAVLE passing standard is evaluated periodically to ensure that it continues to be accurate and defensible. On December 12, a panel of 15 veterinarians will assemble at the office of the National Board of Medical Examiners in Philadelphia to participate in a NAVLE standard setting workshop. The participants will include three NBVME members, five content experts from the NBVME's Examination Development Advisory Board, two academic deans, two additional veterinary school faculty members, two recent graduates, and a licensing board administrator. Participants were selected to represent all major veterinary practice areas.

The first part of the workshop will involve an orientation and training session led by NBME psychometricians. Participants ("judges") will be asked to describe the characteristics of a minimally proficient entry-level practicing veterinarian (someone who would just barely pass the NAVLE). Next, participants will estimate the difficulty of a set of actual NAVLE

items for this hypothetical candidate. After doing so, the participants will then be given data showing how the same items actually performed on the examination, and they will then discuss their ratings with the group and adjust them if they want to. After several rounds of training, the participants will work individually, rating all 300 items on one form of the NAVLE.

NBME psychometricians will compile and analyze the ratings and provide the judges with a report showing the results of their work, after which they will come up with a recommended passing standard. Following the workshop, the recommended passing standard will be reviewed and approved by the NBVME members. The approved passing standard will be applied to the November-December 2011 NAVLE administration, and scores will be reported in mid-January.

The process may appear to be subjective, but the power lies in the number of judges (15 in this case), and the number of individual ratings (each person rating 300 items). The other key factor is how well the judges can come to terms with the concept of a minimally-proficient entry-level practicing veterinarian. This is perhaps the most challenging aspect of the process, because most people tend to think about the kind of person they would want to hire or work with, and whether that person *should* know the information tested by the item. However, the question before the judges is how many minimally proficient candidates (those who are just barely able to pass the examination) *will* answer the particular item correctly.

NAVLE SELF-ASSESSMENTS PROVE POPULAR

Since 2008, the NBVME has made NAVLE Self-Assessments available through its website. Each assessment consists of 200 multiple choice questions taken from the NAVLE item bank. The assessments are web-based, and candidates who purchase an assessment have 30 days to complete it. Assessments are formatted to look like the actual examination given at Prometric testing centers. Answers to the questions are not provided, but when an assessment is completed, the candidate receives a report showing their performance broken down by major content categories. Because assessments consist of actual NAVLE items that were previously administered to candidates, the report also includes a prediction of the candidate's NAVLE score based on their performance on the assessment.

In 2010, over 1,300 Assessments were sold, and we are on target to sell well over 1,500 this year. There are presently three English and two French forms available. One new form in each language is being developed for release in 2012.

Each assessment costs \$50. Assessments are available to anyone who wants to purchase them, so they offer an excellent opportunity for people to see what the NAVLE is really like.

January NBVME Meeting

The NBVME will meet in Hilton Head, SC, January 27-28, 2012. The meeting will be chaired by Dr. Rick Tubbs. Persons interested in attending the January meeting should contact the NBVME office for details.

NAVLE® Pool Review

On January 26, most NBVME members will join members of the NBVME's Examination Development Advisory Board (EDAB) and some former NBVME members in a review of several hundred items from the NAVLE item bank. Periodic pool reviews are done to ensure that items in the active item pool are suitable for use on NAVLE forms. Participants will work in teams, by content area, and will be assisted by four editors from the NBME's test development department.

Pool review can result in various decisions on individual examination items. Those items that are judged to be valid and relevant to entry-level private clinical practice are retained in the active item bank. Items that have been used multiple times but still address important content can be moved from the NAVLE item bank to the NAVLE Self-Assessment pool, and used to create future assessments. Items that are judged to

be beyond entry-level are moved to a pool for possible use by veterinary specialty boards. Items that have minor flaws or that need updating are revised by the review teams during the review. Items that contain more serious flaws, but still address important content, are referred back to item writers for revision. Finally, items that are outdated or are considered not relevant to entry-level private clinical practice are deleted from the item bank.



Collaboration with the NBME

Formal collaboration with the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) is one of the primary topics on the agenda for the January meeting. The NBVME's strategic plan, approved in July 2010, identified a collaborative relationship with the NBME as a focus area for this year. Representatives of the two organizations have met several times in recent months to discuss some of the major principles in establishing a new relationship. As the NBVME looks for ways to enhance the NAVLE process, the overarching objective of the collaboration is to move beyond a vendor-client relationship toward a long-term alliance, where each parent benefits from the strengths of their organization, sharing both risks and rewards.

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The purpose of the *National Board Report* is to educate, to inform, and to communicate information about the objectives and programs of the NBVME. The opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official opinions, views, or policies of the NBVME or any of its members, unless expressly so stated.

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Fall NAVLE Item Review Meeting

Fifteen of the 19 2011 NAVLE item writers met at the NBME office in Philadelphia November 9-10 to review newly-written items. Nearly 700 items were judged to be acceptable and were added to the NAVLE item bank.

New NAVLE items approved at the fall review meeting will be used for the first time on examination forms developed for the 2012-13 testing cycles. All new items are pretested before they are used as live items. Pretesting ensures that items used to de-

termine a candidate's score have acceptable performance statistics.

Most NAVLE item writers are appointed by members of the NBVME's Examination Development Advisory Board.



2011 NAVLE Item Writers. *Seated:* Drs. Fernando Marqués, Joe Klopfenstein, Joie Watson, Dale Boyle, and Rodney Auffet. *Standing:* Drs. Alex Gallagher, Elisabeth Snead, Allan Corber, Ruthanne Chun, Lauren Kleine, Lais Costa, Marion Desmarchelier, Sandra Mitchell, Vicki Thayer, and Anthony Nanton.

NBVME Office Move Coming

The NBVME's lease on its present office suite expires in April 2012, and we are in need of more space. For the past several months, we have been working with a real estate agent to find suitable office space downtown. The business and real estate market

in Bismarck is doing very well, so there is not an abundance of available space to consider. At press time, we are preparing an offer on new space in a building about four blocks south of the present location in downtown Bismarck. When ar-

rangements for the move are finalized, we will notify the NBVME's constituents and update our website to reflect the new location. The mailing address will remain the same: PO Box 1356, Bismarck, ND 58502.

NBVME Examination Updates

NAVLE®

The November-December 2011 testing window for the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) opened Monday, November 14 and runs through Saturday, December 10. The NBVME office processed and submitted 3,814 candidate eligibility files for the fall examination, an increase of 25 from fall 2010.

Applications for the April 9-21, 2012 testing window will be available in mid-December, and the application deadline for new candidates is January 3. Scores from the fall testing window will be reported in mid-January. Candidates who do not pass the November-December examination will be able to submit applications for the April window until February 15.

Qualifying Examination

The NBVME's Qualifying Examination (QE) is a 300-item web-based basic science examination used as the step three requirement of the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). A total of 44 PAVE candidates took the QE at 12 locations on September 15. The failure rate for the 33 first time test takers was 39.4%.

The NBVME has received 26 applications from PAVE candidates for the January 19, 2012 QE administration. In addition, Iowa State University and Tuskegee University plan to administer the QE to their third year students in January. The QE will be administered again on May 17, 2012, and that administration will include PAVE

candidates and students at Western University. Additional accredited schools interested in using the QE as a standardized assessment of basic science knowledge should contact the NBVME office for more information.

Species Specific Examinations

The NBVME offers companion animal and equine species specific examinations for use by licensing boards. There are two forms of each examination, each consisting of 100 multiple-choice items taken from the NAVLE item bank. Each form has its own recommended criterion-referenced passing point. Boards interested in the species specific examinations should contact the NBVME office.